

Reconciling autonomy and sustainability: ‘hybridisation’ as an organisational strategy

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Introduction

- Ethnographic study of 3 community organisations which work in health promotion.
- Prevailing health inequalities in England - a complex interplay of economic, social and psychological factors
- Community development methods can be effective in supporting individuals and communities in improving health and wellbeing.
- Community organisations are currently facing an unprecedented set of circumstances.



Research question

What enables organisations to be financially sustainable whilst maintaining autonomy?



= independence of:

- purpose
- voice
- action

Methodology

- Semi-structured interviews with staff, trustees, volunteers, service users and external stakeholders
- Participant observation
- Staff workshops: collages reflecting their organisation's identity
- Feedback and discussion of initial findings with staff and trustees



The organisations

- Established in 2001-2002 as local authority/NHS projects supported by NDC or lottery grants, now organisationally independent but largely reliant on public funds
- Work in areas of high deprivation and health need
- Provide services for the general population, not targeted at particular group or health need.
- Recognised by independent bodies for the positive impact of their work

Health Connections

- Yorkshire
- Suburban and semi-rural ward
- Area of mixed affluence, some ethnic minorities
- Registered charity and company
- 24 part-time employees + volunteers

Healthy Millborough

- North West
- Urban
- 2 white, working class & 1 predominantly South-Asian neighbourhood
- Registered charity and company
- 8 part-time employees + volunteers

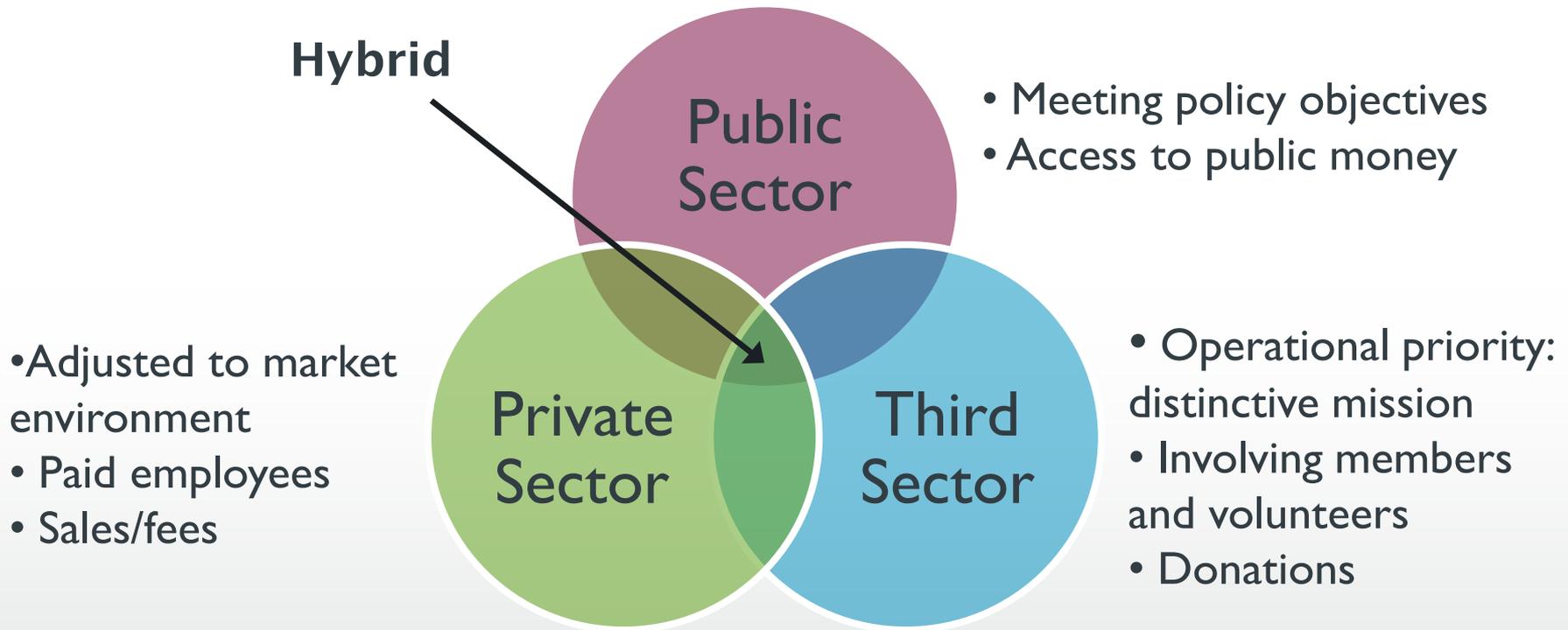
Overton Wellbeing Group

- South East
- Estate on edge of city
- White working class
- Unregistered – formalised as local residents committee
- 8 volunteers (till March 2012 supported by council officer)

Finding 1: Variation in sustainability and autonomy

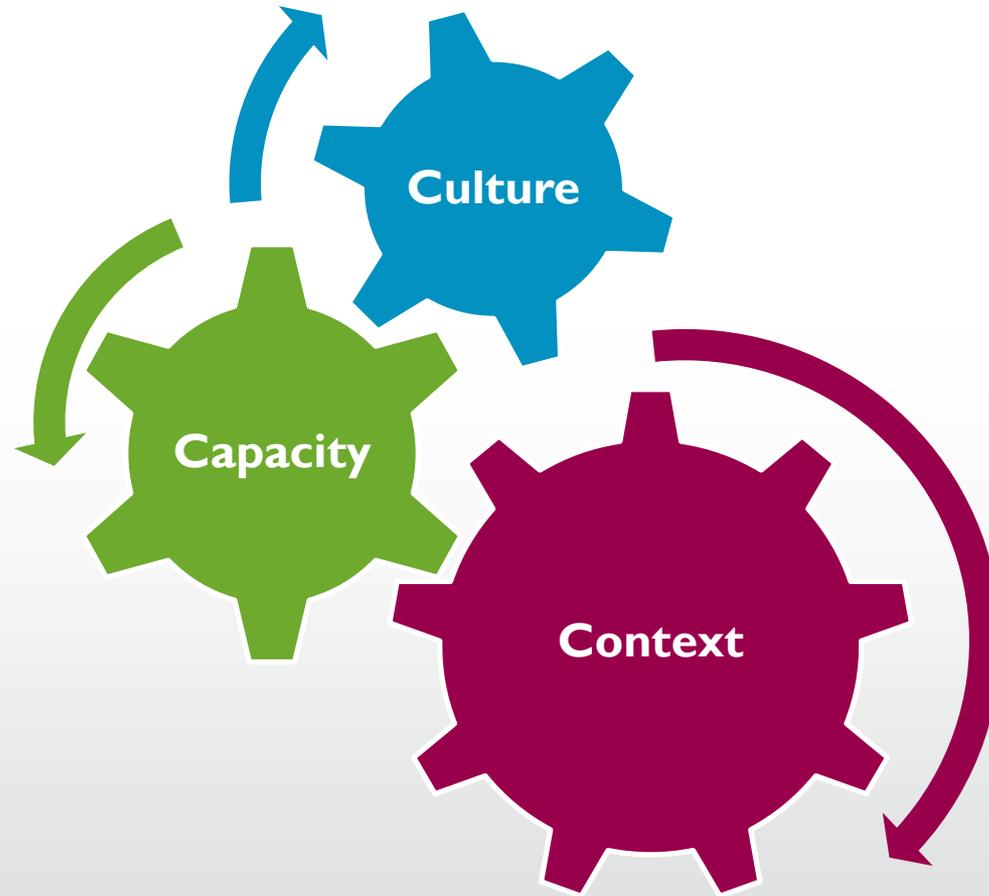
	Health Connections	Healthy Millborough	Overton Wellbeing Group
sustainability	High	Medium	Low
autonomy of purpose	High	High	High
autonomy of voice	High	Medium	Low
autonomy of action	Medium	Medium	Low

Finding 2: 'Hybridity' as an organisational strategy

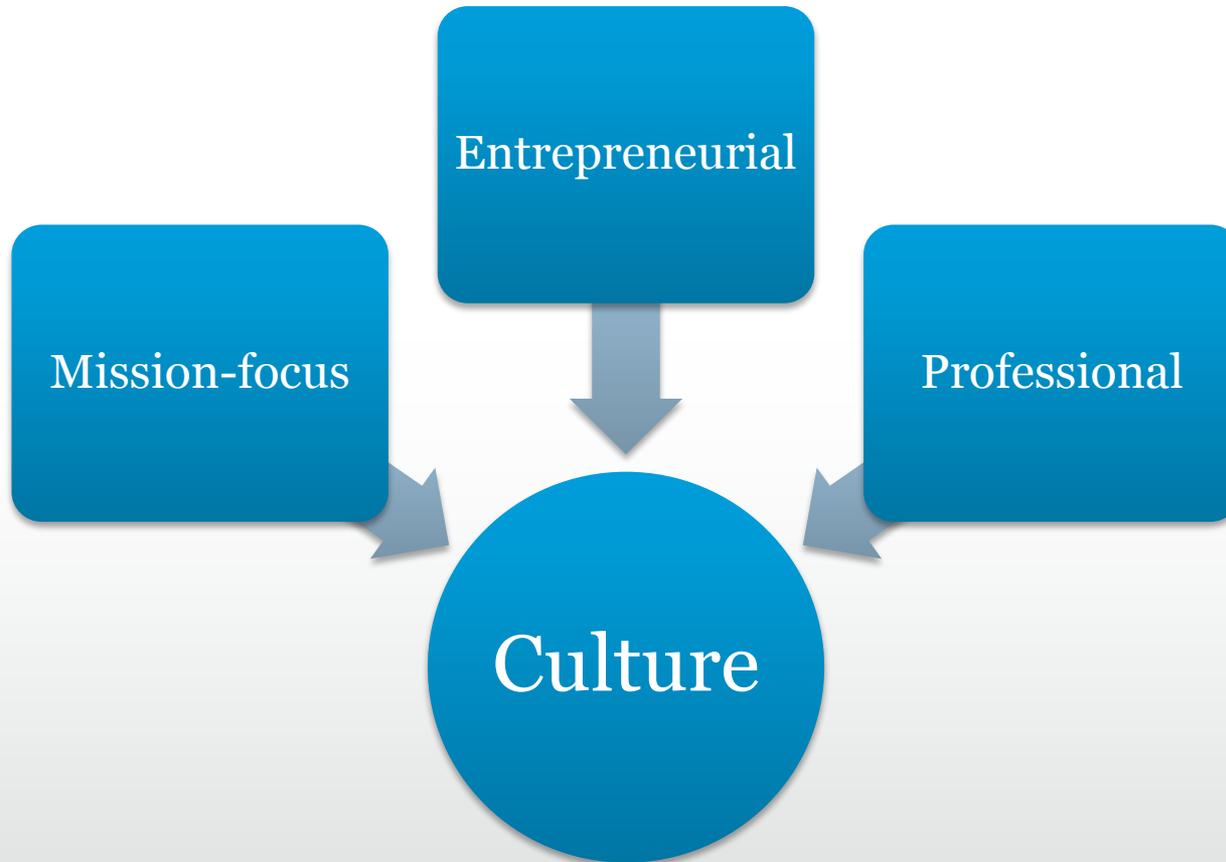


Source: adapted from Billis, D (2010)

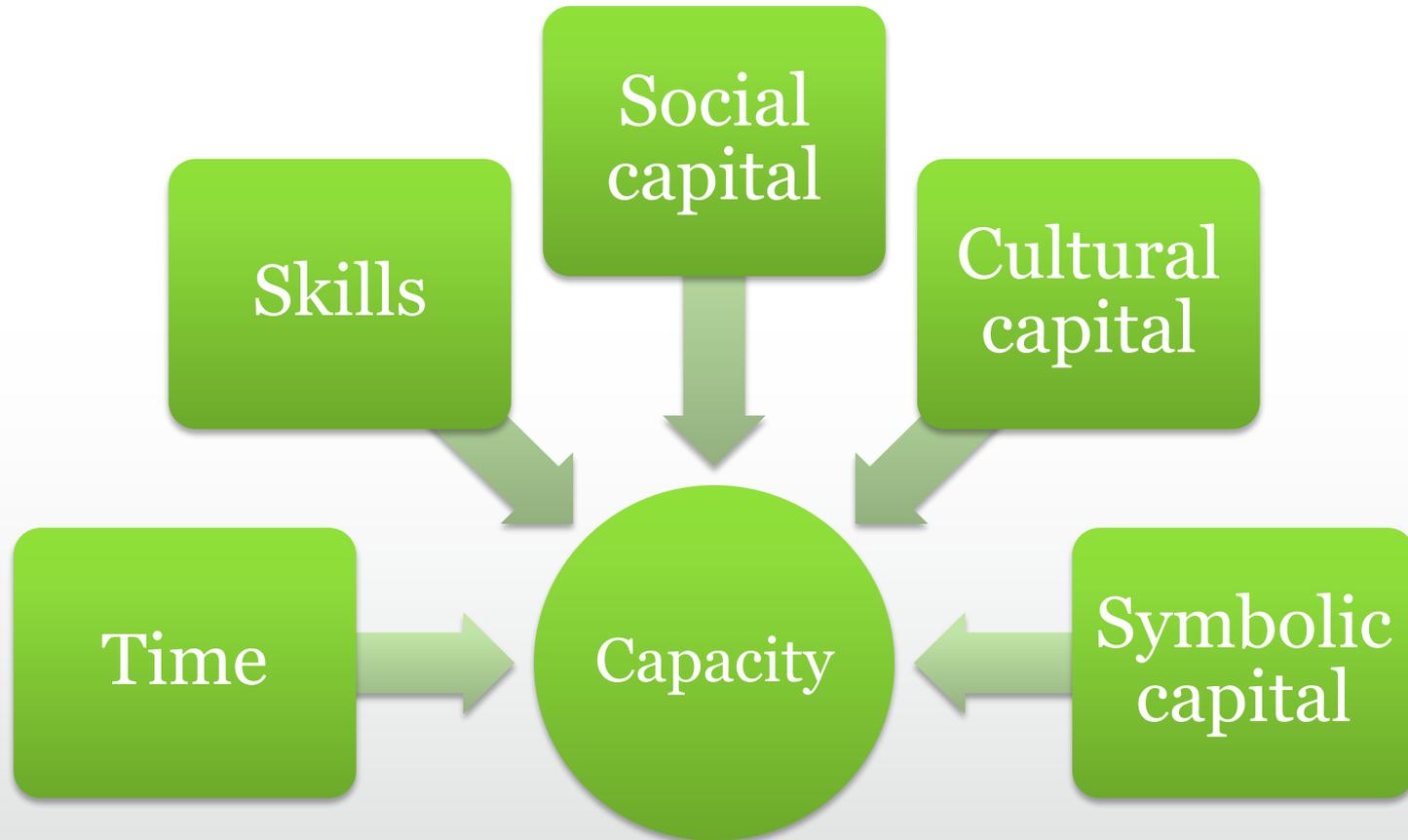
Finding 3: Enabling 'hybridity'



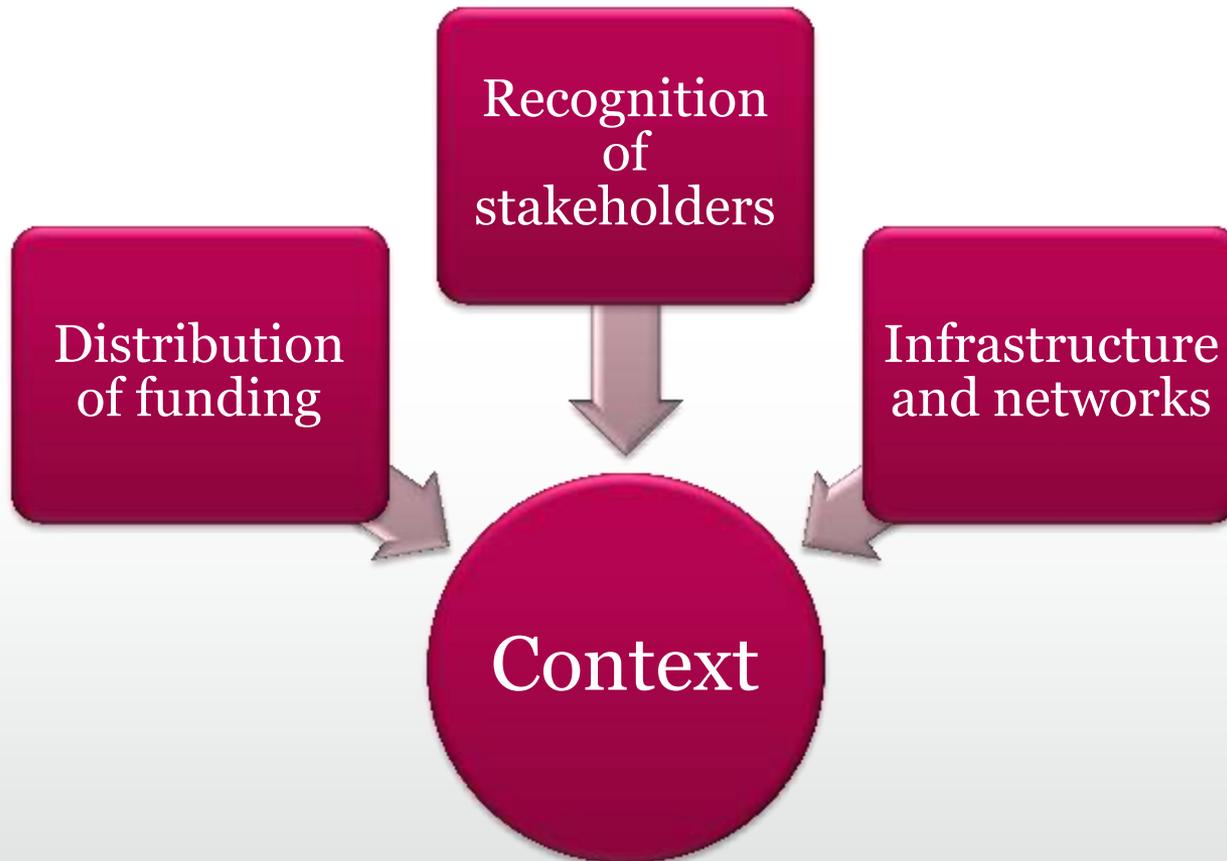
Organisational culture



Organisational capacity



Organisational context



Finding 4: Impact on autonomy and sustainability

	Health Connections	Healthy Millborough	Overton Wellbeing Group
Culture	High	Medium	Low
Capacity	High	Medium	Low
Context	High	Medium	Low



	H C	H M	O W G
sustainability	High	Medium	Low
autonomy of purpose	High	High	High
autonomy of voice	High	Medium	Low
autonomy of action	Medium	Medium	Low

Conclusions

A 'hybrid' organisational model can enable community organisations to maintain autonomy whilst remaining sustainable.

Their ability to implement ways of working characteristic of different sectors is highly dependent on the extent to which:

- they develop an organisational culture which is coherent, but centred around their mission as well as entrepreneurial and professional
- they have available the necessary time, skills and social, cultural and symbolic capital
- Their local context is a conducive environment for small community organisations and supportive of community development methods in health promotion

Further research

- How do organisations make sense of a ‘hybrid culture’?
- What is the significance of different forms of capital in the field of health promotion?
- Is there a local path-dependency in how relationships are built between public bodies and third sector organisations?

Thank you for listening!